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## MORE BIRD NOTES FROM BIG BEAR VALLEY, SAN BERNARDINO MOUNTAINS

By WRIGHT M. PIERCE

WITH FIVE PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

THE TIME from June 19 to June 30, 1916, inclusive, was spent in field study by the writer at Big Bear Lake, altitude 6750 feet, in the San Bernardino Mountains, California. Most of the time was taken in working along the south side of the lake and up into the little canyons in that locality. However, trips were made to the east end of Bear Lake and Baldwin Lake, and also to Bluff Lake, 7575 feet altitude. From the some sixty or more species observed, with many nesting records, the following seem to deserve mention.

**Colymbus nigricollis californicus.** American Eared Grebe. Eared grebes were quite common in many of the little coves and bays, but only two breeding colonies were located on Bear Lake, one of probably forty nests containing from one to eight eggs each in a little bay near the I. S. Ranch found June 22, and another small colony at the east end of Bear Lake, June 26. The nests in the colony near the I. S. Ranch were poorly constructed, almost flat with scarcely any cup, the eggs usually lying in the water, and the whole loose mass rather insecurely fastened to the branches of several fallen pines floating in the water or in the weeds close to the shore. In the water under several of the nests were eggs which had fallen off probably as the birds climbed on their frail nest platforms or left them with undue haste. As many as nine eggs were found under one nest, and I think it safe to say that at least a hundred eggs in this one colony were lodged on the bottom beneath the nests. As we approached in a boat I saw several of the birds hastily covering their eggs before leaving. This was the main breeding colony on Bear Lake; only a few scattered nests were seen in other places and a small colony of perhaps a dozen nests at the east end of the lake. In striking contrast to the nests of the above colony were the nests in a colony of probably two hundred located at the west end of Baldwin Lake, June 25. Here the nests were well built, with a distinct cup, and raised at least four inches from the water. Hundreds of the old birds with young were swimming about just off-shore. A few

nests with eggs were located, one with nine; but from the majority the young had hatched.

*Dafila acuta*. Pintail. A pair flushed from the marsh grass at the east end of Bear Lake, June 26, but I was not able to locate their nest.

*Querquedula cyanoptera*. Cinnamon Teal. On June 25, this duck was quite common at the east end of Bear Lake where at least twenty-five pairs were seen. Three or four young about one-third grown were seen here in the marsh grass, but flopped away hurriedly at our approach. This same day one nest was discovered with ten eggs nearly ready to hatch. The nest was in a bunch of marsh grass in very swampy land in a pasture and about a quarter of a mile from the lake proper. The female flushed from the nest, the latter being heavily lined with down feathers. In this pasture there was a large herd of cattle and they had tramped all around the nest; it seemed just luck that the nest had not been destroyed. The same day two or three pairs of these



Fig. 45. NEST, EGGS, AND ONE NEWLY HATCHED CHICK OF SORA RAIL; BEAR LAKE, SAN BERNARDINO MOUNTAINS, JUNE 25, 1916

ducks were seen at the west end of Baldwin Lake, and one destroyed nest was found in the same locality.

*Porzana carolina*. Sora Rail. In the same meadow where the Cinnamon Teal's nest was found, a nest containing ten eggs and a recently hatched young of the Sora Rail was discovered (see fig. 45). Though just hatched the little dark colored fellow attempted to crawl away when we parted the grass over the nest. I managed to keep him still long enough to secure a photo. The nest was composed of marsh grass closely woven into a cup and completely arched over, making its discovery rather difficult. Further search disclosed another nest with six eggs, a newly hatched young and many egg shells. Also several nests from which the young had hatched were found nearby. Soras were flushed several times. I believe this is the first nesting record for this bird for Big Bear Valley.

*Oreortyx picta plumifera*. Plumed Partridge. Abundant near Baldwin Lake, June 19; several flocks of young of various sizes seen, from small birds to some nearly half-grown. I saw a flock of very small young, eight or ten of them, at Bluff Lake on June 20, and on June 29, two broods of small young in the same locality. In an open field near the I. S. Ranch store I saw an old bird on June 24, with three small young not over a day old.

*Sphyrapicus varius daggetti*. Sierra Sapsucker. I located a nest by watching the bird on June 26. The cavity was in the dead top of a large live silver fir about forty-five feet up. The cavity had a small opening and was only 5 or 6 inches deep; diameter, inside,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  or 2 inches. The nest held two large young and one smaller dead one. It was hard to see how more than one bird could survive in such a small space, so it was not surprising that the probably weaker bird had apparently been suffocated.

*Chordeiles virginianus hesperis*. Pacific Nighthawk. Pacific Nighthawks were quite common flying over the east end of Bear Lake as we entered the valley on June



Fig. 46. EGGS OF PACIFIC NIGHTHAWK, IN PLACE; NEAR BEAR LAKE, SAN BERNARDINO MOUNTAINS, JUNE 22, 1916

19. Three sets of eggs were found on the little ridges about one-half mile back from the lake shore and not far distant from Pine Knot Lodge. In the first instance, June 22, the eggs were laid on the bare earth in a cavity scratched out by the bird (see fig. 46). The second set, found June 24, was laid on the leaves and pine needles under an oak tree; and the last set on a little patch of bare earth from which the leaves had apparently been scratched away, also under an oak bush. Incubation was well started in each set. In each instance the eggs were found by flushing the bird, but even then they were rather difficult to locate. Late in the morning on June 30, there were at least a hundred of these birds feeding over the east end of Bear Lake. Several were taken and all were adult breeding males.

*Stellula calliope*. Calliope Hummingbird. Two nests of this hummingbird were located on June 24 in a little canyon near the lake shore. One on a small branch about 45 feet up and almost inaccessible, but which I finally obtained, contained two heavily incubated eggs. The other nearer the trunk of a large pine and about 30 feet

up, held two fresh eggs. I succeeded in getting a photo of this nest (see fig. 47). Both nests were found by watching the birds. Both were small and rather poorly made, of weed fibres. This hummingbird was quite common, but further search for nests was unsuccessful as usually the birds would dart off into the top of the high pines and firs anywhere from seventy-five to over a hundred feet up, at which distances one could not follow them.

*Sayornis nigricans*. Black Phoebe. Seen several times on June 23 in a little canyon near Pine Knot Lodge, and again on the same date near the dam.

*Empidonax wrighti*. Wright Flycatcher. Wright Flycatchers were very common all through the western end of the valley, frequenting the buckthorn from the lake shore up into the little canyons and even up to the higher ridges. I failed to find any of these birds about the east end of Bear Lake or about Baldwin Lake. Many nests



Fig. 47. NEST OF CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD, THIRTY FEET ABOVE THE GROUND; NEAR BEAR LAKE, SAN BERNARDINO MOUNTAINS, JUNE 24, 1916

were located, nearly always in buckthorn from 2 to 3 feet up (see fig. 48). Two nests were found in manzanita and three in oak bushes. The sets were uniformly of four eggs. On June 22 nests with large young were found, and others with fresh eggs on the same date. Two nests just being built were discovered on June 29. Probably the later sets were caused by the first nests being destroyed. This seems to happen often, as several nests under observation were undoubtedly robbed by the chipmunks which infest all the brush in great numbers in this region.

*Passerella iliaca stephensi*. Stephens Fox Sparrow. Considerable time was spent in trying to locate a nest of this species, but without results except that I am almost certain it nests either on the ground or very low down under the thick brush. Nesting

must begin quite early as several families of full-fledged young were seen, and several taken, on June 20.

*Vireosylva gilva swainsoni*. Western Warbling Vireo. On June 24 I saw adults and fully fledged young of this species flying about in the willows near the I. S. Ranch store. I located a nest with large young in a small willow in a little canyon near Pine Knot Lodge on June 26, and another nest the same day in a large oak in the same locality, and upon which the bird was sitting. The latter nest was practically inaccessible being at the extreme end of a small branch 30 to 35 feet above the ground.

*Myadestes townsendi*. Townsend Solitaire. While walking along the road near Bluff Lake, June 20, a Solitaire flushed from a nest not over three feet away. The



Fig. 48. NEST OF WRIGHT FLYCATCHER, IN BUCKTHORN BUSH; NEAR BEAR LAKE, SAN BERNARDINO MOUNTAINS

nest (see fig. 49), a rather loosely made affair of pine needles, weed stems and leaves, contained a complete set of three fresh eggs. It was on a ledge under a bank about four feet up from the road. On June 26 I found a nest in a little canyon near Pine Knot Lodge at the base of a large pine tree. The nest was in a cavity that had formed by the rotting away of the base and side of the tree, and was placed directly on the ground. It contained two large young and one bird that had been recently killed. The head of the dead bird had been gouged out, and one of the live birds had a large scar on the top of its head. The nest was made of the same material as the one found near Bluff Lake but was more deeply cupped and closer woven. Both old birds were near the nest. The young were beautiful little fellows, and their buffy spotting made them very

hard to see even after I had located the nest. A family of full-fledged young were seen flying among the pines at Bluff Lake, June 29.

*Hylocichla guttata sequoiensis*. Sierra Hermit Thrush. These birds were not at all common in the locality covered, as they were met with only a few times. Once or



Fig. 49. NEST OF TOWNSEND SOLITAIRE, IN PLACE ON ROADSIDE BANK; NEAR BLUFF LAKE, SAN BERNARDINO MOUNTAINS, JUNE 20, 1916

twice I heard their song in the little canyons back from the lake, but they were very wary and I was unable to approach closely. I saw one of these thrushes on a little stream near Bluff Lake, June 29, but failed to locate a nest.

*Claremont, California, August 1, 1916.*